



Department for the

Economy

An Roinn

Geilleagair

www.economy-ni.gov.uk

Peter McCallion
Clerk to the Committee for the Economy

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Adelaide House
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Our ref: [REDACTED]

Your Ref: [REDACTED]

Date: 09 06 2026

Dear Peter

Utility Regulator (Support for Decarbonisation Preparation) Bill

Further to your letter dated 22 May 2026, seeking Delegated Powers Memorandum, EQIA and Keeling Schedule for the Utility Regulator (Support for Decarbonisation Preparation) Bill. Please see response below which has been cleared by Minister Archibald. This information is fully disclosable under Freedom of Information.

The Bill is stand alone and does not make any amendments to existing legislation, nor does it give the Minister powers to make subordinate legislation. A Keeling Schedule and a Delegated Powers Memorandum have therefore not been produced.

An Equality Screening Assessment was published in 2024. It showed that, as the Bill is technical in nature and designed to empower the Utility Regulator in supporting the Department in development of a range of policies, there are no direct impacts on section 75 groups. Any policies or legislation developed as a result of the Bill will be subject to full screening exercises. The Equality Impact Assessment attached at

Appendix A reflects this position. Some amendments have been made to the text to reflect updated positions following the public consultation exercise.

Should the Committee require any further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact the Department.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer.

Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer



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DEPARTMENT FOR THE ECONOMY

SECTION 75 EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY SCREENING TEMPLATE

The purpose of this form is to help you to consider whether a new policy (either internal or external) or legislation will require a full equality impact assessment (EQIA). Those policies identified as having significant implications for equality of opportunity must be subject to full EQIA.

The form will provide a record of the factors taken into account if a policy is screened out, or excluded for EQIA. It will provide a basis for quarterly consultation on the outcome of the screening exercise, and will be referenced in the biannual review of progress made to the Minister and in the Annual Report to the Equality Commission.

Further advice on completion of this form and the screening process including relevant contact information can be accessed via the Department for the Economy (DfE) Intranet site ([DfE Screening](#)).

Don't forget to RURAL PROOF - see [Governance and Accountability Notice 04/20](#)

Part 1. Policy scoping

The first stage of the screening process involves scoping the policy under consideration. The purpose of policy scoping is to help prepare the background and context and set out the aims and objectives for the policy, being screened. At this stage, scoping the policy will help identify potential constraints as well as opportunities and will help the policy maker work through the screening process on a step by step basis.

Public authorities should remember that the Section 75 statutory duties apply to internal policies (relating to people who work for the authority), as well as external policies (relating to those who are, or could be, served by the authority).

Information about the policy

Name of the policy

Utility Regulator (Support for Decarbonisation Preparation) Bill

Is this an existing, revised or a new policy?

Existing – The legislation is required to support the net zero policy direction set by the Northern Ireland Executive's Energy Strategy 'The Path to Net Zero' and Climate Change Act (NI) 2022. It is not a new policy.

What is it trying to achieve? (intended aims/outcomes)

The proposed legislation will facilitate the development of net-zero policies essential to fulfilling requirements under Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 and Climate Budgets (2023-2027). The policy direction to achieve a low carbon energy system was agreed by the NI Executive when it published its energy strategy 'The Path to Net Zero' (December 2021).

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-energy-strategy-path-net-zero-energy>

The Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation (also known as the Utility Regulator) has an essential role to play in advising the Department for the Economy in the development of a range of net-zero policies that will impact on the energy sector.

The proposed Bill will place a duty on the organisation to provide advice, information or assistance on matters connected to the development of proposals, policies, strategies or plans relating to the energy sector.

Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy?

If so, explain how.

The proposed legislation itself will not impact any Section 75 categories. The legislation is designed to empower the Utility Regulator to support the Department in the development of a range policies. This development process, for each policy, will necessarily explore a range of options to deliver the desired outcomes, and it is not possible to assess these at this time.

The Bill is designed to enable the Utility Regulator to support the Department in developing policies essential to the decarbonisation of the electricity and gas sectors and to support delivery of Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 objectives.

The policies developed will be subject to a section 75 screening exercise in their own right.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

The Department for the Economy, working in conjunction with the Utility Regulator

Who owns and who implements the policy?

The legislation places a duty on the Utility Regulator to provide the Department for the Economy:

‘advice, information, or assistance for the purposes of, or in connection with the development of any proposal, policy, strategy or plan relating to the energy sector that the Department is required to develop, or considers it appropriate to develop, under the 2022 Climate Change Act.’

Background

The legislation is required to support the net zero policy direction set by the Northern Ireland Executive’s Energy Strategy ‘The Path to Net Zero’ and Climate Change Act (NI) 2022. It is not a new policy. The proposed Bill will place a duty on the Utility Regulator to provide advice, information or assistance on matters connected to the development of proposals, policies, strategies or plans relating to the energy sector.

Implementation factors

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/decision?

No. Introduction of legislation will provide the Utility Regulator with a legal duty to support DfE in delivery of Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 requirements and the decarbonisation agenda.

Main stakeholders affected

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon?

The legislation places a duty on the Utility Regulator is to support the Department in development of policies that will achieve a low carbon energy system and affordable energy that will benefit households and businesses.

Following the public consultation and additional advice sought by the Department it has been confirmed that electricity and gas license holder fees will be used to fund work associated with the Bill when that falls within electricity and gas statutory functions.

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

The proposed legislation is required to facilitate engagement between the UR and the Department in supporting development of policies essential to the Energy Strategy and requirements on the Department under Climate Change Act (NI) 2022.

The strategy sets out a roadmap to 2030 that includes a range of policy options, which are at an early stage of development. These individual policies, once developed, will be subject to individual EQIA's where appropriate.

The Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 places obligations on all Departments to meet 2050 emissions targets for Northern Ireland for 2050 and details steps to achieve this. It also states that the Department for the Economy must ensure that at least 80% of electricity consumption is from renewable sources by 2030.

Available evidence

Evidence to help inform the screening process may take many forms. Public authorities should ensure that their screening decision is informed by relevant data. The Commission has produced this guide to [signpost to S75 data](#). Also refer to the [DfE Guidance for Equality Screening](#) for some evidence sources.

What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

The proposed legislation is required to facilitate engagement between the UR and the Department in supporting development of policies essential to the Energy Strategy and climate budgets. A full screening exercise will be carried out on future policies developed and their potential impact on groupings.

A public consultation exercise on the Bill took place and no concerns were identified in relation to Section 75 groups.

Religious belief evidence / information:

As Above

Political Opinion evidence / information:

As Above

Racial Group evidence / information:

As Above

Age evidence / information:

As Above

Marital Status evidence / information:

As Above

Sexual Orientation evidence / information:

As Above

Men & Women generally evidence / information:

As Above

Disability evidence / information:

As Above

Dependants evidence / information:

As Above

Needs, experiences and priorities

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy/decision?

(Specify details of the needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 categories below).

A public consultation exercise on the Bill took place and no concerns were identified in relation to Section 75 groups.

Religious belief: As above

Political Opinion: As above

Racial Group: As above

Age: As above

Marital status: As above

Sexual orientation: As above

Men and Women Generally: As above

Disability: As above

Dependants: As above

Part 2. Screening questions

Introduction

In making a decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment, the public authority should consider its answers to the questions 1-4 which are given on pages 66-68 of this Guide.

If the public authority's conclusion is **none** in respect of all of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then the public authority may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is 'screened out' as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, a public authority should give details of the reasons for the decision taken.

If the public authority's conclusion is **major** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then consideration should be given to subjecting the policy to the equality impact assessment procedure.

If the public authority's conclusion is **minor** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality categories and/or good relations categories, then consideration should still be given to proceeding with an equality impact assessment, or to:

- measures to mitigate the adverse impact; or
- the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

In favour of a 'major' impact

- a) The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
- b) Potential equality impacts are unknown, because, for example, there is insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;
- c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;

- d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;
- e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
- f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

In favour of 'minor' impact

- a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;
- b) The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;
- c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunity for particular groups of disadvantaged people;
- d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

In favour of none

- a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.
- b) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.

Taking into account the evidence presented above, consider and comment on the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations for those affected by this policy, in any way, for each of the equality and good relations categories, by applying the screening questions given overleaf and indicate the level of impact on the group i.e. minor, major or none.

Screening questions

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?

(Please provide details of the likely policy impacts and determine the level of impact for each S75 categories below i.e. either minor, major or none).

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**: The proposed legislation is required to facilitate engagement between the UR and the Department in supporting development of policies essential to the Energy Strategy and climate budgets. A full screening exercise will be carried out on future policies developed and their potential impact on groupings
What is the level of impact? / None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**: As Above
What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**: As Above
What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Age**: As Above
What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Marital Status**: As Above
What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Sexual Orientation**: As Above
What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Men and Women**: As Above
What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Disability**: As Above
What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Dependants**: As Above
What is the level of impact? None

2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?

(Detail opportunities of how this policy could promote equality of opportunity for people within each of the Section 75 Categories below).

Religious Belief - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

No. The legislation is technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on different religious groups

Political Opinion - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

No. The legislation is technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on people with different political views.

Racial Group - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

No. The legislation is technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on different racial groups.

Age - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

No. The legislation is technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on different age groups.

Marital Status - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

No. The legislation is technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact due to marital status.

Sexual Orientation - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

No. The legislation is technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact due to sexual orientation.

Men and Women generally - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

No. The legislation is technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact due to gender.

Disability - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

No. The legislation is technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact due to disability.

Dependants - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

No. The legislation is technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact in relation to dependants.

3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Please provide details of the likely policy impact and determine the level of impact for each of the categories below i.e. either minor, major or none.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**: None. The Bill is technical in nature

What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**: None. The Bill is technical in nature

What is the level of impact? None

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**: None. The Bill is technical in nature

What is the level of impact? None

4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Detail opportunities of how this policy could better promote good relations for people within each of the Section 75 Categories below:

Religious Belief - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

None. The legislation is technical in nature.

Political Opinion - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

None. The legislation is technical in nature.

Racial Group - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

None. The legislation is technical in nature.

Additional considerations

Multiple identity

Generally speaking, people can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Taking this into consideration, are there any potential impacts of the policy/decision on people with multiple identities?

(Every citizen belongs to more than one group - For example: disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people).

Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

None identified.

Part 3. Screening decision

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

Considering the above, a decision has been made that a full equality impact assessment is not required, and this proposal has been screened out. This decision has been reached because:

The policy is technical in nature to facilitate engagement between the Department and the Utility Regulator to support the development of policies essential to the Climate Change Act 2022. These policies will be subject to a Section 75 screening exercise.

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment the public authority should consider if the policy should be mitigated or an alternative policy be introduced - please provide details of this consideration.

The policy is technical in nature to facilitate engagement between the Department and the Utility Regulator to support the development of policies essential to the Climate Change Act 2022. These policies will be subject to a Section 75 screening exercise.

If the decision is to subject the policy to an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

None

All public authorities' equality schemes must state the authority's arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity. The Commission recommends screening and equality impact assessment as the tools to be utilised for such assessments. Further advice on equality impact assessment may be found in a separate Commission publication: Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment.

Mitigation

When the public authority concludes that the likely impact is 'minor' and an equality impact assessment is not to be conducted, the public authority may consider mitigation to lessen the severity of any equality impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations.

Can the policy/decision be amended or changed or an alternative policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations?

No

If so, **give the reasons** to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative policy.

The policy is technical in nature to facilitate engagement between the Department and the Utility Regulator to support the development of policies essential to the Climate Change Act 2022. These policies will be subject to a Section 75 screening exercise.

Timetabling and prioritising

Factors to be considered in timetabling and prioritising policies for equality impact assessment.

If the policy has been '**screened in**' for equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1-3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

Priority criterion [choose 1 2 or 3 if a full EQIA is to take place]

Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations **Rating 1, 2 or 3**

Social need **Rating 1, 2 or 3**

Effect on people's daily lives **Rating 1, 2 or 3**

Relevance to a public authority's functions **Rating 1, 2 or 3**

Note: The Total Rating Score should be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the public authority in timetabling. Details of the Public Authority's Equality Impact Assessment Timetable should be included in the quarterly Screening Report.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities?

No

If yes, please provide details.

Part 4. Monitoring

Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission's Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities (July 2007).

The Commission recommends that where the policy has been amended or an alternative policy introduced, the public authority should monitor more broadly than for adverse impact (See Benefits, P.9-10, paras 2.13 – 2.20 of the Monitoring Guidance).

Effective monitoring will help the public authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the policy which may lead the public authority to conduct an equality impact assessment, as well as help with future planning and policy development.

The proposed legislation is interim in nature, in that it is designed to facilitate the development of future policies, which may lead to future Energy Acts. These will be subject to full impact assessments. DfE will monitor the proposed legislation to ensure it is fit for purpose and that it does not impact on any Section 75 groups. No adverse impacts were identified during the consultation.

Part 5 - Approval and authorisation

Screened by: [REDACTED]

Position/Job Title: [REDACTED]

Date: 05/04/2024

Amended Text: [REDACTED]

Position/Job Title: [REDACTED]

Date: 29/05/2026

Approved by: [REDACTED]

Position/Job Title: [REDACTED]

Date: 29/05/2026

Note: A copy of the Screening Template, for each policy screened should be 'signed off' and approved by a senior manager responsible for the policy, made

easily accessible on the public authority's website as soon as possible following completion and made available on request.

For Equality Team Completion:

Date Received:

Amendments Requested: Yes / No

Date Returned to Business Area:

Date Final Version Received / Agreed:

Date Published on Dfl's Section 75 webpage:



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Economy

Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer
Department for the Economy
[REDACTED]

Our Ref: [REDACTED]

22 May 2026

Dear DALO,

Utility Regulator (Support for Decarbonisation Preparation) Bill

At its meeting of 20 May 2026, the Committee for the Economy agreed to write to the Department in respect of the Utility Regulator (Support for Decarbonisation Preparation) Bill, seeking:

- the Keeling Schedule for the Bill;
- the Equality Impact Assessment or screening document; and
- the Delegated Powers Memorandum.

A written response at your earliest convenience and providing the above would be greatly appreciated. The Committee would also greatly appreciate any related background policy information that the Department can provide.

If you require further information or clarification in respect of the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Peter McCallion

Peter McCallion

Clerk to the Committee for the Economy